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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: KADYROV DECLARES VICTORY OVER YAMADAYEV CLAN FOR
CONTROL OF REST OF CHECHNYA

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: What started on April 14 as a simple case of Chechen "road rage" and escalated into a conflict between the two remaining factions led by Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov and the "Vostok" (East) battalion led by the powerful Yamadayevev clan has resulted in Kadyrov neutralizing the only remaining security service in Chechnya that did not answer to him. A Ministry of Defense (MOD) brokered truce between the two factions, reportedly meant to last until Medvedev became Russia's next president, has given way to a claim by Kadyrov on May 12, confirmed by the MOD on May 13, that Yamadayevev has been suspended from his command of the Vostok battalion. If the Kremlin has gone along with the request that Vostok be demobilized, Kadyrov will appear to have consolidated all the power in Chechnya for himself. End Summary.

Road Rage Triggered Events

¶2. (SBU) On May 12, less than one week after returning to Grozny from participating in Medvedev's inauguration, Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov, announced that the Russian MOD has stripped Sulim Yamadayevev of his command of the "Vostok" battalion with whom forces loyal to Kadyrov had a long-standing feud. On April 14, two heavily-armed motorcades, one accompanying Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov and the other from the "Vostok" battalion in which Sulim Yamadayevev's younger brother Badruddi was riding, met on the Rostov-Baku highway near Gudermes, Chechnya's second largest city. According to some press reports, the disagreement over who should give way to the other led to an argument and then a shoot-out during which two members of the Vostok entourage died. Reuters put total casualties from the incident at 18. Other media outlets reported that after the exchange of fire on the highway, troops loyal to Yamadayevev occupied several buildings belonging to the railroad administration, while Chechnya Internal Ministry troops loyal to Kadyrov were said to have surrounded the Vostok battalion base in Gudermes shortly after the incident. In the immediate aftermath -- less than one month before Putin stepped down as Russia's president -- Russian national television channels provided no reporting on this standoff.

Kadyrov Keeps Pressure On

¶3. (SBU) Kadyrov continued the media offensive against Sulim Yamadayevev and his brothers Ruslan and Badruddi. On April 16 Kadyrov said that 200 of the estimated 1,000 Vostok troops had deserted in defiance of Yamadayevev. He also called for the arrest of Badruddi on charges of interfering with a public official's carrying out his duties. (Badruddi was convicted in 2001 of the attempted murder of a senior Moscow health official, but he was later released and joined his older brother as a member of the Vostok battalion.) Police who searched the Yamadayevev family home for Badruddi on April 14 did not find him, but they reportedly discovered an arms cache. Kadyrov claimed on April 16 that many members of the

Vostok battalion had never served in the military and did not have permits to carry weapons.

14. (SBU) Meeting in an extraordinary session on April 17, the Chechen parliament adopted an appeal to Defense Minister Serdyukov urging him to dissolve the Vostok battalion or change its leadership. On April 20, unknown assailants sprayed bullets at the car of a worker in the office of the Chechen Ombudsman, killing the official's five and eight year-old nieces. Pro-Kadyrov officials quickly blamed the incident on members of the Vostok battalion, a charge that they later retracted. More recently, Kadyrov and his supporters had claimed that Badruddi was responsible for the abduction and murder of Yunus and Yusup Arsamakov and their driver, and the murder of Chechen pop singer Milan Balaevoy and her mother.

15. (SBU) According to a representative of the federal Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Southern Federal Region, while the Sever (North) and Yug (South) battalions are part of Ministry of Internal Affairs forces in Chechnya, the Vostok (East) and Zapad (West) battalions are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense. As part of the MOD, they were not under Kadyrov's control. Moscow sent a special commission to Chechnya in order to settle the conflict or calm the situation during the transfer of the presidency from Putin to Medvedev, but its recommendations were never made public.

16. (SBU) Some commentators stated that Kadyrov allowed the initial standoff to escalate in order to force Moscow to side with him in his quarrel with the Yamadayev clan. Carnegie

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Moscow Center Senior Caucasus expert Aleksey Malashenko believed that one of the two sides may have decided in April to make a move for power during the transition. He alleged there are influential people in the federal power ministries who do not like the way Kadyrov has been running Chechnya and who sided with the Yamadayev clan. Commentator Yuliya Latynina had suggested two alternatives for the Russian government in addition to dissolving the Vostok battalion -- preserve its fighting capability and its deterrence potential against Kadyrov by relocating it to Abkhaziya or directing Kadyrov and Yamadayev to resolve their differences. In the event of the latter scenario, Latynina believed that Yamadayev needed to be replaced by a new commander.

Comment

17. (C) While the fate of the Vostok battalion and its commander is not finally resolved, it appears that Kadyrov has convinced the Kremlin to get rid of Yamadayev and either disband Vostok or replace its leadership with those loyal to Kadyrov. Former Duma deputy Ruslan Yamadayev -- excluded from the United Russia candidate list for the December 2007 parliamentary elections by Kadyrov -- has tried to put the best light on the MOD decision, telling the Kommersant daily that his brother will receive a promotion out of his suspension. That is unlikely. It is apparent that Kadyrov has again managed, with Moscow's help, to keep this latest instance of clan-based instability in Chechnya under control. How Medvedev and Putin will, in their turn, will continue to keep a check on Kadyrov's political ambitions is less clear.
RUSSELL